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June 28, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR:

GENERAL HAIG

THROUGH:

JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

FROM:

WILLIAM L. STEARMAN

SUBJECT:

Disruption of Enemy Logistics in South Vietnam

ON-FILE NSC
RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

While in Saigon, you might want to suggest that a greater and concerted effort be made to disrupt the enemy's supply system in South Vietnam. Because we do not have the tools to measure the flow of enemy supplies, in South Vietnam, we have paid scant attention to what is probably the most difficult and vulnerable part of the enemy's entire logistics system. The intelligence community has generally given the impression that the enemy's supply problem ends when he achieves "throughput" (to border base areas) when, in fact, it is precisely at this point where his logistics task becomes most difficult and complicated. As a result, we have focussed almost entirely on "trail" interdiction (mostly in Laos) without working out a systematic approach to block the flow of supplies to enemy forces within South Vietnam.

In the summer of 1969, when the enemy had full use of Sihanoukville and thousands of tons of supplies were being trucked to the border sanctuaries (then totally undisturbed) near MR-3, the enemy was still experiencing logistics problems in MR-3, even in areas close to Cambodia. (This came out very clearly in the July 1969 COSVN Resolution 9.) GVN pacification efforts had made it difficult to collect rice and taxes from the peasants and to impress labor to carry supplies, had made it risky to move supply columns into MR-3 and had made advanced caches vulnerable to discovery.

In many areas where pacification has been disrupted by the present offensive (as well as in normally unpopulated regions), the enemy seems to be moving

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supplies with little fear of interdiction; however, in many cases he is laboriously moving these supplies by bicycle or backpack using impressed civilian porters and rear service troops. We know from experience that such supply columns are very vulnerable to ambush and that the enemy is most reluctant to send supplies through corridors which might be interdicted on the ground.

The enemy is making an intense effort to collect, move, and cache as much of South Vietnam's fifth month rice crop as possible -- and is succeeding well in such areas as Binh Dinh Province. It is little appreciated that most of the rice consumed by Communist troops in South Vietnam comes from within country. (We have, for example, reports of food shortages in the 308th Division which is only a short distance from North Vietnam.) If one, could, in theory, deny the enemy all of this indigenous rice, it is difficult to see how he could fight much of a war in the South.

If, for example, the enemy is able to sustain offensive operations in the B-3 Front through the summer, it will probably be largely due to rice brought across (uninterdicted) trails from Binh Dinh Province.

The enemy has conscripted large numbers of civilians to move this rice (and other supplies). He is also sending civilians into GVN-controlled areas to buy supplies.

As far as can be ascertained from here, there is no systematic, countrywide effort to counter the above described enemy logistic efforts.

The following are some suggested measures which, if properly implemented, could significantly disrupt the enemy's internal (SVN) logistics system and make it very difficult -- if not impossible -- for him to sustain his present military effort:

-- Acquire increased intelligence on the enemy's internal LOC's and entry and exit points adjacent to populated areas. (For example: How are the 7th Division troops blocking Route 13 getting their supplies? How is rice moved from Binh Dinh Province to Kontum Province?)

-- Interdict LOC's with ambushes (mechanical or direct) set by small guerrilla units made up, for example, of Kit Carson Scouts and Armed Propaganda Teams.

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-- Establish countrywide rewards for information leading to the discovery of supply caches (many of which are built by unwilling labor).

-- Inform civilians in Communist-controlled areas that their lives will be endangered if they carry supplies for the enemy.

-- Tighten controls over the movement of supplies from GVN-controlled areas.

Most of the above measures are presently being implemented, but generally on local or hit-and-miss basis. What is needed is a concerted high priority campaign. Moreover, such a campaign can continue to foul up the enemy's logistics -- and at low cost -- after we have reduced or even stopped our air interdiction of the trail and of LOC's in the North. Ultimately, South Vietnam's very survival might depend on the success of this effort.

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